

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 328

By Williams

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of Coach James "Ken" Sparks of Jefferson City.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly were greatly saddened to learn of the passing of Coach James "Ken" Sparks; and

WHEREAS, Ken Sparks was an exemplary public servant and consummate professional who worked assiduously to improve the quality of life for his fellow citizens in numerous capacities; and

WHEREAS, from 1980 until his retirement during the 2016-2017 season, Coach Sparks served with acumen and alacrity as head coach of the Carson-Newman University football team, in which position he earned the respect of his players and coaching staff alike for the exemplary quality of his work; and

WHEREAS, Ken Sparks began his coaching career at Gibbs High School, where he restarted the football program with a winning season. A year later, he coached the quarterbacks and wide receivers at Tennessee Technological University while he earned his master's degree; he next coached at Morristown East High School for one season before returning to his alma mater, Carson-Newman University; and

WHEREAS, during his first tenure at Carson-Newman, Ken Sparks served as the offensive coordinator for head coach Dal Shealy and also oversaw the track program. While he was in charge of the football team's offense, the Carson-Newman Eagles advanced to their first-ever National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) Champion Bowl in 1972. For his superb efforts with the track program, Coach Sparks was named the Southern Collegiate Track Coach of the Year in 1977; and

WHEREAS, in 1977, Coach Sparks took over the Farragut High School football program. During his tenure with the Admirals, he guided the team to a 29-5 record and was twice voted KIL and KFA Coach of the Year; and

WHEREAS, after three seasons with Farragut High School, Ken Sparks was asked to take command of the Carson-Newman football program, where his coaching career would become the stuff of legends; and

WHEREAS, during his thirty-seven-season-long tenure as head coach of the Carson-Newman Eagles, Ken Sparks amassed a most enviable resume, including an overall record of 338-99, which is the fifth highest win total nationally, and a winning percentage of .7699, which is the fourth highest in college football history; and

WHEREAS, under Coach Sparks's guidance, the Eagles won five NAIA National titles and played for three national titles after moving to National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division II. They also compiled twenty-one South Atlantic Conference Championships, made twenty-five NCAA or NAIA playoff appearances, and had 104 players named All-American; and

WHEREAS, no stranger to awards and accolades, Coach Sparks received the Fellowship of Christian Athletes Lifetime Achievement Award, the National Coach of the Year Award, the All-American Football Foundation's Johnny Vaught Lifetime Achievement Award, the FCA Grant Teaff Coach of the Year Award, and the Uncommon Award presented by former NFL coach, Tony Dungy; and

WHEREAS, Coach Ken Sparks was also inducted into the NCAA Division II Hall of Fame Coaches Class, the South Atlantic Conference Hall of Fame, the Knoxville Sports Hall of Fame, the Carson-Newman Athletic Hall of Fame, the Tennessee Sports Hall of Fame, and the NAIA Hall of Fame; and

WHEREAS, the statistics, the awards, and the acclaim were secondary to Coach Sparks, who was a devout man of the Christian faith. He not only guided his players to athletic excellence but encouraged them to lead righteous lives in accordance to the teachings of Jesus Christ. Each season, he would tie in his football program to a Biblical theme, and it was common for practices to open and close with prayer; and

WHEREAS, Ken Sparks was also deeply devoted to his family, and he always endeavored to remain true to family values of the highest order; and

WHEREAS, Ken Sparks enjoyed the loving companionship of his wife, Carol Sparks, and was the proud father of Chad Sparks and Chandra Childress and step-father of Tim Bobo and Kim Hines; and

WHEREAS, he will also be fondly remembered by his grandchildren, Duncan, Drew, and Dara Sparks; Clay, Cole, Calvin, and Craten Childress; Lauren Grace, Emma, and Anna Kate Hines; and Peyton Walker, Alexandra, Carlie, and Christopher Bobo; as well as a host of friends, fans, and former players; and

WHEREAS, Coach Ken Sparks leaves behind an indelible legacy of integrity and probity in public life, compassion and loyalty in private life, and diligence and dedication in all his chosen endeavors; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting that the members of this General Assembly should pause to remember the bountiful life of this exceptional public servant and human being; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED TENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we honor the memory of Coach James "Ken" Sparks, reflecting fondly upon his impeccable character and his stalwart commitment to living the examined life with courage and conviction.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we express our sympathy and offer our condolences to the family of Coach Sparks.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.